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## THE LORD'S SUPPER

*Lessons for Church and State*

### Modeling Sacrificial Love

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BY MARTIN SHUPACK

The Lord's Supper encourages and guides our everyday congregational practices of joyful and sacrificial love.

This issue of the *Washington Memo* continues our series on how faithful church practices model the ways of God to the nations (see "Baptism: A Witness to the Nations," Jan.–Feb. 2003). This witness can have a transforming influence in society at large by changing personal attitudes, reforming cultural mores and inspiring new directions in public policy.

In celebrating the Lord's Supper the church remembers and proclaims Jesus' life, death, resurrection and coming again. We thankfully recognize God's grace extended to us in the sacrificial love of Christ. We also offer ourselves to extend grace and lay down our lives in covenant commitment to our sisters and brothers.

Sacrificial covenant love is expressed in a variety of ways. For example, the Lord's Supper is bound up with economic sharing (Acts 2:41–47 and 1 Corinthians 11:17–34) and the love of God is made concrete in meeting material needs: "We know love by this, that Christ laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. If anyone has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need, yet refuses help, how can God's love abide in them?" (1 John 3:16–17).

Church members also bear one another's burdens by giving our time and energy in situations of difficulty. Hospitality is another form of covenant love, as we open

our homes to church members or "strangers" in need of shelter and a family's love and support.

Reflecting that Christians everywhere are celebrating the Lord's Supper reminds us that the church is a worldwide fellowship. When we develop mutual relationships with communities in other parts of the city, country or world—learning from one another and sharing one another's joys and sorrows—we express the universality of Communion in concrete practice.

The Lord's Supper encourages and guides our everyday congregational practices of joyful and sacrificial love. "Communion Beyond the Church Doors" on page 7 recounts examples of the kind of love that lights up the world.

The nations, in turn, move toward the will of God when they embrace policies and practices analogous to the churches' witness. This might include ensuring that people everywhere have sufficient food and water, providing public assistance for people in poverty and empowering them to provide for themselves, establishing safe residences for the homeless, and placing the needs and priorities of people in other countries on an equal level with our own. The articles in this issue of the *Washington Memo* call for advocacy on behalf of such public concerns. ■

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BY J. DARYL BYLER

God's people will find their security and blessing, not by dominating or destroying their enemies, but by being joined together in one body on equal footing.

## Making Known God's Mystery

Most of us like a good mystery. Our minds race ahead, straining to match wits with the author to see if we can predict the story's outcome before reading the last page. The best mysteries baffle even the greatest minds.

Some mysteries defy human reason and are only known through divine revelation. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul tantalizes his readers with just such a mystery. This mystery had never before been made known to humankind (Ephesians 3:5a). But God's Spirit has now revealed it to Paul and other church leaders (v. 5b).

What is this great mystery? Simply this: "the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (v. 6).

And why is this a big deal? In God's mysterious plan, God's people will find their security and blessing, not by dominating or destroying their enemies, the Gentiles, but by being joined together in one body on equal footing—heirs *together*, members *together*, sharers *together* (v. 6, NIV). This reconciliation to God and one another is made possible through the sacrificial love of Christ (2:16).

There is no more poignant symbol of this mystery than the bread and cup which we receive each time we celebrate our communion with God and with one another.

This mystery has cosmic significance that dares not stay within the confines of the

church's walls. "God's intent," says Paul, is that "through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" (v. 10).

It is to these mighty principalities and powers—political, military and economic systems which seek to order human life, but often resist God's reign—that the church has been chosen to reveal God's great mystery.

Principalities and powers typically seek to order life by threatening, controlling and overpowering. For example, the new organizing principle for U.S. foreign policy seems to be one, not of sacrificial love, but of global domination. It is the capacity to cajole "cooperation" from others and the ability to act alone if necessary.

In order to build this kind of global muscle, President Bush's 2003 military budget will push \$400 billion—more than the combined military spending of the next 25 countries. And that's without counting the costs of an increasingly likely war with Iraq!

Bread and wine. Body broken. Blood shed. These are the forever reminders of God's mystery—revealed first in Christ and now through the church. Where God reigns, human relationships find meaning, and life is ordered:

- through a cross, not by controlling;
- by sacrificing, not by subduing;
- by transforming enemies, not by destroying them;
- by building mutual relationships, not by dominating others.

A mystery indeed for a world that equates strength with military might, and security with the clout to crush those who make us afraid.

Each time we receive the bread and cup, we acknowledge God's profound mystery. And we recommit ourselves to make this mystery known in the church, and through the church to the world. ■

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To contact the MCC U.S. Washington Office, please see our address on the back page. See our weekly commentary at [www.thirdway.com](http://www.thirdway.com) and visit our web site at [www.mcc.org/us/washington](http://www.mcc.org/us/washington).

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# Bread and Peace

BY RACHELLE SCHLABACH

On a warm summer night last July, I and about a dozen other members of a church delegation sat on a rooftop in Sincelejo, a city in northern Colombia. There, local church leaders shared the Lord's Supper with us. As they reflected on the blood of Christ, they spoke of the blood that has been shed in the country's decades-long civil war.

Not long after that, the violence got even worse. In response, Colombian Mennonites held a collective fast. As they ended the fast by breaking bread together in Bogotá's main plaza, they spoke of their commitment to Jesus' example of nonviolence. "Bread and Peace," they called it: *Pan y Paz*.

In the Colombian context, bread and wine—and the sacrificial love which they symbolize—take on immediate meaning. The church members who work for peace by teaching mediation skills, or provide food and clothing to families in their community, are well aware they put their lives in danger to do so.

Colombians have invited North American believers to share with them in this work. When they organized the *Pan y Paz* fast, they specifically asked U.S. Americans to use the time to write Congress, opposing military aid to their country.

As this goes to print, the Fiscal Year 2003 budget bill containing nearly \$400 million in military aid for Colombia is still stalled, along with other budget bills. The package includes \$100 million to train and equip a

Colombian military unit to protect an oil pipeline and a permanent change of focus from counter-narcotics to "counter-terrorism." Because Congress is behind schedule, it will likely rubber-stamp the whole package.

Later this year, Congress will turn its attention to the foreign operations budget bill for FY 2004. Analysts expect the request for military aid to Colombia to be even higher than it was for FY 2003—as much as \$500 million.

As we celebrate the Lord's Supper, let us take the opportunity to act in solidarity with Colombian brothers and sisters in Christ. Let Congress know that you oppose military "aid." Instead, U.S. policies should point in the direction of bread and peace for every Colombian. ■

## CAPITAL QUOTES

*"The [United States] has three big priorities: fighting terrorism abroad, protecting our homeland, and ensuring economic growth. That's where you'll see money spent, and other functions of government will have to grow more slowly. . . . We can't make the mistake of trying to have guns and butter."*

—Amy Call, White House budget office (Washington Post, Jan. 6, 2003).

*"The America I envision . . . gains its power through being the first to help, not the first to strike. It is an America, which when asked for help, dispenses bread instead of bombs, medical assistance instead of missiles, and food instead of fissile materials. . . . It takes wisdom to have great power and to make gentle its presence in the world."*

—Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio).

## Pontius' Puddle



# Fair Trade and the Coffee Crisis

BY MARTIN SHUPACK

Ruperto Caceres is a coffee farmer in Honduras. In January he spoke on the impact of economic globalization at an MCC-sponsored consultation in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. *Señor* Caceres explained that he and other coffee farmers used to receive a price sufficient to support their families. Then the international coffee market collapsed.

Small coffee producers in Honduras now receive less than their cost of production. Many have abandoned their farms, or like Sr. Caceres, have taken on second and third jobs. Their families lack sufficient food and medicine, and their children must leave school. In Central America alone, 600,000 coffee workers have lost their jobs in the past two years.

Sr. Caceres' story is being repeated throughout Latin America, Africa and Asia. Since 1997 the price of coffee on the world market has dropped nearly 70 percent. Producers now receive less than 50 cents per pound. Some 25 million coffee growers in over 50 developing countries are in crisis.

Sr. Caceres blames the intermediaries—the processors, exporters, and coffee companies—who continue to make large profits. There are systemic issues as well. From 1962 until 1989 an international coffee agreement managed coffee's global supply and demand. Because many developing countries rely heavily on coffee production for their economic stability, managing the global market was viewed by the United States as a national security issue during the Cold War.

In 1989 this agreement was abandoned. The United States withdrew its support and pushed free trade. The World Bank encouraged more countries to increase coffee production for export, glutting the world market and collapsing prices. Ten years ago coffee-producing countries were receiving around \$10 billion of \$30 billion in annual global coffee sales (though much of this went to in-country intermediaries). Now, less than \$6 billion of a \$55 billion retail market stays in the producing countries.

Following the MCC consultation on globalization, I visited a coffee processing plant that prepares coffee beans for sale internationally. It was formed—with help from the Honduran Mennonite Social Action Commission—by several cooperatives of small coffee farmers in order to eliminate intermediaries. Some participating cooperatives are able to sell in the “fair trade” market. Fair trade purchasers pay at least \$1.26 per pound to the growers, regardless of the ordinary market price.

For example, the plant I visited sells to Starbucks (which carries a small percentage of certified fair trade coffee), most recently receiving \$1.41 per pound. The plant received 10 cents of this to cover its costs, leaving \$1.31 for the coffee farmers. Coffee companies could act more justly and improve their coffee's quality by purchasing a growing portion of coffee beans on fair trade terms.

Addressing the systemic problem will require policy changes at the global level. The United States can help by working with other coffee-consuming countries to resolve the oversupply problem and ensure that hard-working farmers receive a just return on their labor.

MCC U.S. is currently developing a project to encourage Mennonite and Brethren in Christ congregations to buy fair trade coffee for church and home consumption, in order to help coffee farmers and as a way to start addressing global trade issues. This is one way churches can model the love and justice of Christ for the nations. ■

In Central America alone, 600,000 coffee workers have lost their jobs in the past two years.

## SPRING SEMINAR JUST AROUND THE CORNER . . .

Celebrate spring by coming to the MCC Washington Office Spring Seminar, April 6–8, 2003, in Washington, D.C. “The Earth is the Lord's: Public Policy that Honors Creation,” will include plenaries, workshops, and a visit to your congressional representative's office. Join other church members in exploring the biblical call to care for God's wonderful creation! To register, see the insert in the Jan.–Feb. *Washington Memo* or contact the Washington Office at (202) 544-6564.

# Communion in the Cafeteria

*For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26).*

On the way to the office in the morning I pass the neighbor kids and wave. They're walking to school, laughing, sharing a bag of Doritos for breakfast. Tonight, I suspect, they'll eat dinner at McDonald's. Probably the most nutritious food they'll get today is their lunch in the school cafeteria.

John Howard Yoder in *Body Politics* calls the church to remember the teachings of Christ and the suffering of the marginalized *when-ever* we break bread: three times a day, not just once a month. I eat my lentils for lunch (everything you've heard about MCC is true) and ponder how Christians can extend Communion to low-income kids in the United States who seem to subsist on the Eucharist equivalent of grape soda and white bread.

The U.S. government guarantees free lunch for low-income children. Some kids get free breakfast at school as well, and free meals in after-school programs, summer day camps, child care centers and homeless shelters—all thanks to child nutrition programs. What's more, child nutrition funds cover WIC (Women, Infants and Children) programs, which provide food to low-income children and their mothers.

In a country where minimum wage jobs, lack of affordable housing and rising health care costs often force families to choose between shelter, medicine and food—and where nutritious food is increasingly unavailable to inner cities and rural areas—child nutrition programs provide a vital safety net. In addition, money for good food ultimately saves the nation health care costs, and leaves schools with more resources for education.

In 1997, in Santa Monica, Calif., a cafeteria got creative, launching the country's first Farm to School Program in a low-income elementary school. Stocking its salad bar with produce from a nearby farmers' market, and planting a community garden in the playground, the school tracked kids' choices: local lettuce vs. greasy burgers. Lettuce won, hands down, and Farm to School Programs, some funded by child

nutrition dollars, now serve 68 school districts and 500,000 students.

However, the president's budget for Fiscal Year 2004 calls for cuts in child nutrition programs and proposes new proof-of-eligibility requirements to weed out children who, the administration says, are not poor enough to qualify for a free lunch. Advocates are alarmed, especially for immigrant communities. Applications are written at a ninth-grade level, which can be a barrier for some immigrant parents. In addition, undocumented immigrants lack proof-of-eligibility documents or are afraid to submit pay stubs for fear of discovery.

This spring, while farmers plant seeds, Congress will re-authorize child nutrition programs for the first time in five years. It is a critical time for advocates to encourage legislators: 1) to eliminate proof-of-eligibility procedures that discriminate against immigrants, 2) to provide adequate funding for child nutrition programs amid war spending and tax cuts, 3) to increase the nutrition of food served to low-income kids despite pressure from agribusiness and fast food corporations, 4) to cut the red tape that discourages organizations from applying for funds and 5) to allocate dollars for creative initiatives like the Farm to School Program.

Even as we write letters to Congress and maintain safety nets like child nutrition, we've got to keep our eyes on the prize: locally-grown, sustainably-produced, nutritious food for everyone—and that means transforming the way we buy and grow what we eat. After all, visions of God's kingdom promise abundant harvests, full tables and a vine and fig tree per person (Micah 4:4). In my version, there will be enough 100 percent grape juice and whole wheat bread for all the kids on my block. ■

BY BETHANY SPICHER

**This spring, while farmers plant seeds, Congress will re-authorize child nutrition programs.**

## NEW VIDEO AVAILABLE

Who is our neighbor? What is our responsibility to them? With interviews in inner-city Philadelphia, Pa. and the coal mining region of Kentucky, "A Voice on the Hill," a new 28-minute video, explores how advocacy grows from service. The video highlights the work of the MCC U.S. Washington Office in encouraging churches to work on a political level as well as meeting people's immediate needs. Available to borrow from any MCC office. To purchase, contact MCC at (717) 859-1151.

# Bearing the Burdens

BY DAVID M. WHETTSTONE

All too often, guns play a role in purveying death throughout the land. The United States averages some 30,000 fatalities through guns per year.

Jesus affirms that death does not prevail. Through the Lord's Supper, we are empowered to love one another, bear each other's burdens, treasure life and recognize and demonstrate the values of the reign of God. God's grace empowers our struggle against gun violence.

Two quadruple murders in Wichita, Kansas, have been cause for reflection for Tom Harder, a pastor at Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church. Gun violence has recurred in certain parts of town, particularly poorer sections. He wrote: "The Evil One uses guns to continue to destroy life. It's more than just persons committing crime. The people who pulled the trigger are children of God who succumbed to evil."

In the past, church members joined others in the community in prayer vigils to respond to such tragedies. Actions such as vigils are statements that the destructive power of evil can be rebuked. Things don't have to be this way. Something can be done.

Through legislative advocacy, members of Boulder Mennonite Church have also given public witness against gun violence. They helped efforts to get the Colorado state legislature to require background checks for sales at gun shows. These efforts made important contributions to national policy. Two years later, the closing of the gun show loophole may be reversed by overwhelming political forces in the state.

Boulder church member, Kathy Small, notes a peculiar irony. Many state legislators profess Christian faith. Yet some of them support potentially harmful changes to gun laws. One example is the expansion of gun ownership through broad permission to carry concealed weapons (in hospitals, schools, and other public venues). She says, "On one hand they're proposing to post 'In God We Trust' in all public buildings, on the other they are very supportive of guns. It isn't consistent. How can the proliferation of guns ever make for a safer community? How did we ever get from Jesus to here?" Some church members and friends will renew their advocacy efforts.

Whether it's in poorer parts of towns like Wichita or states and legislatures like Colorado, the same experiences and dynamics surrounding gun violence and policy are nationwide. The proliferation of guns and their easy accessibility are also the concerns of lawmakers in Washington, D.C.

Bills to grant manufacturers and sellers of firearms and ammunition blanket immunity from lawsuits—whether contested matters involve safety design, distribution, or other responsibilities—will be reintroduced in Congress. Only the gun industry would have such an exemption.

Over a decade ago, assault weapons wreaked harm on citizens and many law officers. Characterized by a high rate of fire and military-like features, these weapons were used in Columbine (Littleton, Colo.), Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.-area shootings. Since 1994, federal law prohibits the sale of semiautomatic assault weapons. The gun industry's current marketing of military-style weapons has circumvented the ban. Much improvement and renewal are needed regarding the ban, due to expire in September 2004.

Tom Harder states: "Sometimes it will take something to get a response and commitment—a crisis, a tragedy, an incident or the reality of increasing gun violence." Let us strive to be proactive, rather than reactive. Let us meet at the table and receive understanding, power and love from Christ to act. ■

"On one hand they're proposing to post 'In God We Trust' in all public buildings, on the other they are very supportive of guns. It isn't consistent."

—KATHY SMALL,  
BOULDER MENNONITE CHURCH

## JOIN A NETWORK

The Washington Office is coordinating an *Anabaptists Against the Death Penalty Network* and a *Gun Violence Prevention Network*. Participants will receive: hotlines on legislative developments, devotional/reflection materials, informational updates, help with questions, and assistance in connecting with state and national organizations and activities. Please contact us to register or to get more information.

# Communion Beyond the Church Doors

## CONGREGATIONAL STORIES

We asked congregations to tell us stories of how they live out the Lord's Supper in their daily lives. Acts of hospitality, sharing financial resources, or otherwise bearing one another's burdens are all examples of the sacrificial, covenant love expressed in Communion.

*Iglesia Menonita del Cordera* in Brownsville, Tex., for example, offers small houses behind the church as temporary shelter for people looking for a permanent home. They also give small grants when their *prójimos* (neighbors) need help with utility bills or food. During the 1980s, as Central Americans fled fighting in their home countries, the church provided sanctuary to hundreds of refugees.

Sunnyslope Mennonite Church, in Phoenix, Ariz., has been highlighted for their missional work by Mennonite Mission Network. Young skateboarders were wearing down the church's steps. The church's first response was to chase them away, but instead they decided to reach out to the kids—many of whom are on the fringes of their peer groups—by building skateboard ramps. During the skating time, the kids, their parents and other community members enjoy snacks provided by the church and get to know congregation members.

The Grantham Brethren in Christ Church in Grantham, Pa., organized daily meals for the family of a young mother who underwent serious back surgery. Meanwhile, a young woman in the congregation provided in-home day care for the children. When two young women attempted suicide, the congregation rallied around the families. When the house of a local family burned, the church collected money, clothing and other items to help them rebuild once again. The congregation also provided a safe haven for a missionary family that had spent many years overseas and needed time to be restored. Accountability groups meet with couples going through tough times in their marriage.

In another Brethren in Christ congregation, one family was struggling to respond to the needs of one of their children, who had severe emotional problems. Another couple

in the congregation agreed to have the child live in their home some of the time, to provide a respite for the family and a stable environment for the child.

Circle of Hope, a network of Brethren in Christ congregations in Philadelphia, Pa., has reached out to their community by starting an organization called Circle Venture. Circle Venture's mission is to generate compassionate service. Mission teams provide hospitality, tutoring and mentoring to local children and teenagers.

With the help of Mennonite Mission Network, since 1998 seven Mennonite congregations in Illinois have been in partnership with churches in Argentina. The partnership has helped to build mutual relationships between church members on different continents. The generosity of the Argentine churches, even during a time of economic recession, challenged the Illinois churches to give more during times of hardship, instead of less.

A recent survey of congregational news in the *Mennonite Weekly Review* included reports of a baked potato bar to raise money to help pay for a girl's medical expenses, members helping out at the local homeless shelter and assistance for a father and daughter who lost their home in a house fire. Many times such acts go unnoticed, but they are at the heart of the church's mission.

Countless more stories could be told of ways in which Anabaptist congregations daily live out Communion. As we partake in the Lord's Supper, may we be reminded of our commitment to Christ and to one another. ■

**"Participating in the communion service symbolizes our unity with believers of all times and places."**

—ARTICLES OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE OF THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH (NORTH AMERICA)

**"Remembering how Jesus laid down his life for his friends, we his followers recommit ourselves to the way of the cross."**

—CONFESSION OF FAITH IN A MENNONITE PERSPECTIVE

**"[The Lord's Supper] is a supper of remembrance, celebration and praise which strengthens believers for true discipleship and service."**

—CONFESSION OF FAITH, U.S. AND CANADIAN CONFERENCES OF MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCHES



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## SOUND THE TRUMPET!

ISSUE	SUMMARY	ADVOCACY NEEDED
NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT	While a recent U.S.-Russian treaty calls for cutting each country's nuclear weapons from 6,000 to 2,200 "strategic warheads" by 2012, the Bush administration is now seeking funds for developing smaller "usable" nuclear weapons and considering the possibility of "first use" of nuclear weapons against certain countries. "The Urgent Call" campaign seeks 10 million endorsers by 2004 and urges concrete steps toward the abolition of all nuclear weapons.	For more information about "The Urgent Call" and to add your name, visit <a href="http://www.nrdi.org">www.nrdi.org</a> .
TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)	TANF, the nation's primary public assistance program, funds state initiatives to move low-income families into employment and provide some cash assistance. The fight over increased work requirements (House version) vs. more money for child care (Senate plan) has delayed TANF re-authorization, scheduled for 2002, until this spring.	Urge your members of Congress to support a TANF bill that encourages education and job training, provides adequate funding for child care, and includes benefits for legal immigrants.

### USEFUL ADDRESSES



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